

REMARKS

Claims 1-7 were pending in the application. Claims 1-7 are currently amended. New claims 8-22 have been added. Applicants request examination of claims 1-22, including independent claims 1 and 12, and dependent claims 2-11 and 13-22.

§103 Rejection

Claims 1-7 remain rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Jacques (French Patent No. 2 801 492) in view of Vignaud et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,176,680) and further in view of Schlapfer et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,501,684).

The Examiner alleges that Jacques discloses each of the elements of the previously present claims except that Jacques does not disclose lateral undercuts, a ring placed along the pin, and a cavity capable of securing the pin with a ring about it. The Examiner states that Vignaud discloses a similar device including a split ring (9), clamping means (7, 8, and 18) and lateral undercuts. The Examiner states that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the device of Jacques with the split ring and lateral undercuts.

Applicants traverse the rejection of claims 1-7 as being unpatentable over Jacques in view of Vignaud and further in view of Schlaper. "The proposed modification cannot render the prior art unsatisfactory for its intended purpose." MPEP §2143.01 V. In this case, the combination of Jacques and Vignaud would not provide a satisfactory device because the device of Jacques could not suitably secure the ring of Vignaud. Jacques discloses two projecting sides (10) that can be clamped onto a rod by bringing the sides closer together with a bracket (7). Further, the ring of Vignaud cannot be

combined with the side walls of Jacques because the side walls of Jacques, although suitable for securing a rod, would not be suitable for securing a ring. For example, the side walls of Jacques form a channel (11) (see page 4, translation of Jacques), whereas the screw of Applicants' disclosure provides a cavity that engages the ring in a "snap-on" configuration (claim 1) or having a "partially spherical inner surface configured to engage the outer surface of the at least one rings" (claim 13). Neither reference discloses, teaches, or suggests these claimed features.

In addition, the Office Action states that Schlapfer teaches a sliding ring having longitudinal cuts. Applicants believe that the ring of Schlapfer, like the ring of Vignaud, could not be used with the device of Jacques for the reasons cited above.

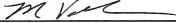
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request the reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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